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ABSTRACT

A program to train professional aides to identify, recruit, and train indigenous volunteer leaders to conduct nutrition education programs with youth groups was tested. The program employed 24 professional aides, 56% being under 25 years of age (13 whites and 10 Negroes). The aides attended a 3-day orientation session, at which the procedure to be followed was explained (identify and meet influential members of the community and potential teacher-leaders; interview and select teacher-leaders; and carry out orientation and training of teacher leaders), and the aides were then sent to the nine urban areas selected for the study. Findings of the study are: (1) personal contact is the key to the success of the program; (2) contacting influential persons is necessary; (3) homemakers have the best attitude toward the program, and are the most help in securing teacher-leaders; and (4) homemakers and students appear to be the best possibilities for serving as teacher-leaders, but more time should be devoted to training them. The program's objectives were carried out successfully. (DB)

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GETTING VOLUNTEER LEADERS ON THE JOB IN THE 4-H-LIK NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR LOW INCOME YOUTH IN URBAN AREAS OF LOUISIANA

by

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In early 1970 the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service employed 24 women to conduct a 4-H-like nutrition education program for low income youth in nine urban areas of the state. This program was to be in addition to an expanded nutrition program already being conducted by program aides with adult and youth throughout the State. Individuals employed were professionally trained, all having a college degree, and are referred to as "professional aides."

These professional aides were charged with a responsibility which had never been fully tested in the Louisiana situation--to go into the communities and identify, recruit and train indigenous volunteer leaders to conduct the nutrition education program with youth. The professional aides were not to do any teaching in the youth groups. Their sole purpose was to seek out and prepare volunteers to do the job. If no volunteers could be recruited in a particular neighborhood, that neighborhood would not have a nutrition education program for its youth.

In order to make the professional aides aware of their responsibilities and to give them some idea of the general procedure to be followed in

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carrying out these responsibilities, they were brought together for an initial three-day orientation session. During this session a proposed procedure for getting leaders on the job was discussed and suggested. The aides were then sent to their respective areas to begin the task.

THE PROPOSED PROCEDURE

All expressions of leadership involve some form and degree of social power. In every social system there are accepted forms of power relations. One form is referred to as non-authoritative power or influence. Two or more influential individuals acting in concert to affect the decision making of the system is referred to as a power structure. Every community has its power structure and experience has shown us that it is essential to gain legitimation or sanction from this group before attempting to introduce new ideas into a community.

Based on this premise, the first step in the procedure for getting leaders on the job was to identify influentials in the community. It was suggested that these influentials be appraised of the kind of educational program being proposed, their support be sought and that they be asked to identify potential teacher-leaders who might be willing to take charge of a small youth group. Also, the influentials would be asked to call a meeting of interested people in the community for the purpose of familiarizing them with the nutrition program and securing their suggestions on volunteer teacher-leaders, meeting plans, and the

organization of youth groups in the neighborhood.

The potential teacher-leaders were to be personally contacted by the professional aide to determine if they were capable and willing to serve. Based on these interviews a selection was to be made of those individuals who appeared to have the greatest potential for assuming the leadership role.

The next step in the procedure was orientation and training of the potential teacher-leaders. Orientation was to include the generic aspects of the job; in other words, the role expectation of the leader position. After the individual understood his job in the general sense, he could then be trained for the specific job at hand.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To test the proposed procedure in an actual situation.
2. To determine the nature of any problems existing in relation to the educational program.
3. To analyze initial involvement of influentials, community people and teacher-leaders.

RESEARCH METHOD

A questionnaire was developed to elicit the kinds of information needed. The questionnaire was discussed personally with each of the professional aides and they were allowed to ask any questions necessary for clarification. The questionnaire was then completed privately by each aide and returned to the researchers in one week. Twenty-three professional aides completed questionnaires. Two primary analytical approaches were used, (1) comparison among key persons and leaders,

and (2) comparisons among aides.

FINDINGS

Personal Characteristics of the Professional Aides

Slightly over half of the professional aides (56%) were under 25 years of age. The upper age level was 51. Likewise, almost equal n numbers of whites and Negroes were represented (13 were white and 10 Negro). Forty-four per cent were married with the larger portion being single.

Influential Persons Contacted

The mean number of influentials contacted by each aide was 16.8. Of the total of 386 influentials contacted, 32 per cent were public officials, 27 per cent were educators, 18 per cent religious leaders, 15 per cent were social/civic group workers, and the remaining 8 per cent were homemakers or students (Table I). The aides tended to contact 1-5 persons in each of the categories with the exception of the homemaker/student category in which they were more likely to have made fewer contacts (Table II).

As perceived by the aide, the majority of all influentials contacted had an excellent to good attitude about the program. The homemaker/student group had the best attitude (none listed as poor) while religious leaders were perceived as having the poorest attitude about the program (21 per cent--Table III).

As perceived by the aides, the majority of all influentials contacted gave <u>much</u> or <u>some</u> help. The homemaker/student group was listed as most helpful with only 4 per cent giving little or no help.

Forty-three per cent of the religious leaders, however, gave little or no help followed by 31 per cent of the public officials in this same category (Table III).

There appeared to be at least some relationship between attitude toward the program and amount of help received from the influential persons as perceived by the aide. The homemaker/student group had the best attitude and gave the greatest amount of help; religious leaders had the poorest attitude and gave the least amount of help. The vast majority of the educators, public officials and social/civic workers had excellent to good attitudes but did not have correspondingly high rankings relative to amount of help rendered.

In total, the 386 influentials contacted gave the aides the names of 1240 individuals whom they considered potential teacher-leaders. Thirty-six per cent of these names were suggested by educators and 26 per cent by public officials. Religious leaders provided only 12 per cent of these names (Table III).

Community Meetings Conducted

Slightly more than half of the professional aides indicated that meetings of parents had been conducted in the community to explain the nutrition program and solicit support. A total of 35 meetings were conducted with this objective in mind.

Potential Teacher-Leaders Contacted and Serving

The 23 professional aides contacted a total of 744 potential teacher-leaders. At the time of the study 17 per cent of the aides had not contacted any leaders and four per cent had contacted 82. The

mean number of potentials contacted was 32 (Table IV). The majority of the contacts were made on a person to person basis and this proved to be the most successful approach.

Forty per cent of the 744 potentials contacted were serving as leaders at the time of the study. The number of teacher-leaders per aide ranged from 0-27 with a mean of 12.5.

Over half (54 per cent) of the teacher-leaders serving at the time of the study were homemakers and 18 per cent were students. The remaining 28 per cent of teacher-leaders serving were classified as either teachers; social/civic workers; community center/lunchroom; health workers; and "non-professionals" (Table V).

The respondents were asked to rank all of their teacher-leaders into two groups based on their conception of what they considered the ideal. Although homemakers made up 54 per cent of the total group of teacher-leaders serving, only 42 per cent of them were ranked in the upper half. By comparison 71 per cent of the community centers/lunchroom/health worker groups were ranked in the upper half although they made up only 8 per cent of the total number of teacher-leaders serving (Table V).

Eighty per cent of the leaders serving were adults and the remaining 20 per cent teenagers. Fifty per cent of the adults serving as leaders were ranked in the upper half and 47 per cent of the teens serving as leaders were ranked in the same category (Table VI).

Enrolling Leaders

In the opinion of the professional aides, the most important criterion contributing to their success in getting leaders on the job was "personal

contact of leaders" (52 per cent--Table VII). Approximately one-fourth of the aides reported either "talking to influential persons" or "personal attributes" as the most important criteria.

Phone calls, group meetings, personal letters, and all forms of mass media were the primary things which were listed as being of no value in enrolling teacher-leaders in the program.

Main reasons given for individuals refusing to serve as a teacher-leader in the nutrition program were lack of time; wanted to be paid to do the job; illness; and lack of interest, in that order.

Training the Leaders

The professional aides were asked to estimate the amount of time devoted to training leaders (Table VIII) to the point where they were prepared to teach Lesson I. This preliminary stage consisted of recruiting and organizing a group of interested youth, soliciting help from parents in the community, understanding the primary objectives of the program, scheduling a series of 16 semi-monthly classes, learning some basic concepts in teaching-learning and mastering the content of the first lesson which had as its objective--"boys and girls to know the four food groups and their relation to health." Total time for all subjects ranged from 1 to 25 hours with the average amount of time being 7 hours. On the average, the greatest amount of time (1 hr. and 20 minutes) was devoted to training in nutrition. The least amount of time was spent on training in such areas as "conducting meetings," getting parent support," and "Extension objectives."

CONCLUSIONS

The brief experience in providing volunteer leadership for the 4-H-like nutrition program showed that the leadership is available if the individuals are asked to serve. However, it was found that for every 4 teacher-leaders who agreed to serve, 10 potentials had to be contacted. Personal contact was perceived by the professional aides as being the key to the success of the leadership program, whereas mass media of all sorts was very ineffective in getting leaders on the job and considered the least valuable activity conducted by the aide. It must be noted, however, that concerted efforts on the part of the aide in getting community or neighborhood people involved as a group in the decision-making process regarding the nutrition program was not carried out extensively.

Contacting influential persons in the community to legitimize the program was also considered necessary for success of the program. Public officials were considered by the aides to be the key influentials whereas they placed very little value on homemakers and students as legitimizing forces. Although educators were the second largest group of influentials contacted, they provided the aides with the largest number of names of potential teacher-leaders. Educators are probably in contact with more individuals qualified to assume the leadership role.

Among the influentials contacted, homemakers seemed to have the best attitude toward the program and gave the greatest amount of help in securing teacher-leaders. Strangely enough, the religious were considered to have the poorest attitude and gave the least amount of help in securing

teacher-leaders. The relationship between attitude and amount of help rendered seemed to be positive in at least some of the influential groups.

Homemakers and students seem to be the best possibilities to serve as teacher-leaders. This is probably due to the fact that most are not working outside the home, and have more time to give to the program. At the same time, the homemakers and students were not perceived by the aides as being the most ideal kind of teacher-leader. Perhaps more time should be devoted to training this group.

Teens ranked equally as high as adults based on the aide's conception of what they considered the ideal leader. This would imply that we might enlist the services of more teenagers in the program, especially during the summer months.

Finally, it appears that this "experiment" in placing volunteer leaders on the job was successful. The same procedure could no doubt have application in all of our regular on-going 4-H programs.

TABLE I

NUMBER OF INFLUENTIAL PERSONS CONTACTED BY OCCUPATION

Occupation	Number	Per Cent
Educators	105	27
Public Officials	122	32
Homemakers/Students	30	8
Social/Civic Group Members	55	15
Religious Leaders	74	18
TOTAL	386	100

TABLE II

A COMPARISON OF THE PROFESSIONAL AIDES ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF INFLUENTIAL PERSONS CONTACTED IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS

	Per Cent Aides Who Contacted			
Occupation	No. Persons	1-5 Persons	6-10 Persons	More than 10 Persons
Educators	4	65	17	4
Public Officials	13	54	13	17
Homemakers/Students	61	35	0	4
Social/Civic Workers	17	74	9	0
Religious Leaders	17	61	22	0

TABLE III

A COMPARISON OF INFLUENTIAL PERSONS ACCORDING TO THEIR RESPONSE TO THE VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM AS PERCEIVED BY THE PROFESSIONAL AIDES

	RESPONSE							
	Attitude			Help Given			Potential Leaders Indicated	
Occupation	Excellent	Good	Poor	Much	Some	Little/ None	No.	Per Cent
Educators (N = 105)	46	48	6	24	46	30	443	36
Public Officials (N = 122)	54	44	2	29	40	31	332	26
Homemakers/Students (N = 30)	47	53	0	38	58	4	82	7
Soc./Civic Workers (N = 55)	56	41	3	30	48	22	233	19
Religious Leaders (N = 74)	34	45	21	27	30	43	150	12
All Influentials (N = 386)	47	48	6	30	44	26	1240	100

TABLE IV

A COMPARISON OF THE PROFESSIONAL AIDES BY NUMBER OF POTENTIAL TEACHER-LEADERS CONTACTED

No. of Potentials Contacted	Aides Who Contacted (Per Cent)
Less than 10	21
11-20	9
21-30	17
31-40	22
41-50	9
51-60	9
61-70	0
71-80	9
More than 80	4

TABLE V

A COMPARISON OF TEACHER-LEADERS PRESENTLY SERVING AND RANKED BY THE PROFESSIONAL AIDES IN UPPER HALF ACCORDING TO OCCUPATION

	Teacher-Leaders Presently Serving		
Occupation	Number	Per Cent of Total	Per Cent by Occupation in Upper Half
Teachers	22	7	50
Soc/Civic Workers	23	8	57
Homemakers	162	54	42
Students	56	18	54
C.Center/L.Room/ Health Workers	24	8	71
Non-professionals	14	5	21
TOTAL	301	100	

TABLE VI

A COMPARISON OF THE TEACHER-LEADERS PRESENTLY SERVING AND RANKED BY THE PROFESSIONAL AIDES IN UPPER HALF ACCORDING TO ADULT OR TEEN LEADERS

Category of Leaders	Teacher-Leaders Presently Serving		
	Number	Per Cent of Total	Per Cent by Category in Upper Half
Adult	241	80	50
Teen	60	20	47
TOTAL	301	100	

TABLE VII

A COMPARISON OF THE PROFESSIONAL AIDES ACCORDING TO THE MOST IMPORTANT CRITERION RECOGNIZED FOR ENROLLING TEACHER-LEADERS

Criterion	Per Cent Aides Recognizing
Talk to Key Persons	22
Personal Attributes of Aides	22
Personal Contact with Leaders	52
Use of Visual Aids	4

TABLE VIII

A COMPARISON OF THE TIME TAKEN BY PROFESSIONAL AIDES IN TRAINING TEACHER-LEADERS ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT AREAS OF SUBJECT MATTER

Subject Matter Area	Time Taken for Training	
	Range (Hours)	Average (Hours - Min.)
Nutrition	< 1 - 8	1 - 20
Teaching Methods/Techniques	< 1 - 5	1 - 15
Organizing Groups	< 1 - 5	1 - 05
Teaching-Learning Principles	< 1 - 4	1 - 05
Understanding Youth	< 1 - 2	0 - 50
Conducting Meetings	< 1 - 3	0 - 45
Getting Parent Support	< 1 - 3	0 - 45
Ext. Philosophy & Objectives	< 1 - 2	0 - 40
Others (Includes health & hygiene, good grooming, citizenship, and recreation)	< 1 - 2	0 - 30
All Subjects	< 1 - 25	7 - 00

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